



The EPI Hospitality and Tourism Unit presents the graduates for 2006

On July 4, graduating students that applied themselves diligently earned the right to perform the time honored tradition of moving their tassels from the left side of their mortarboards to the right. The commencement exercises held in the Renaissance Convention Center on Tuesday evening awarded Associates Degrees to sixteen deserving young people, thirteen having earned Degrees in Hospitality Management and three Associates of Applied Science Degree in Culinary Arts.

It was a proud moment for the student, families and faculty as the this year's class, in cap and gown, accepted not only their diplomas, but also as certain students were singled out to be honored for exceptional performance.

Receiving trophies and plaques for effort above and beyond the already demanding requirements were Alana Olaya Barlaxa for School Spirit, and Denyse Fingal for Academic Excellence. Rene Croes earned recognition for Most Academic Improvement in the Culinary program (IE) as did Zena Habibe for Hospitality Management (FS). Juan Pena of Peru graduated Summa Cum Laude for the highest grade point average of the class, a 3.6, for which he announced to the gathering, "I feel like a superstar!"

Mr. Randy Geerman of the faculty conducted the commencement exercises, and the EPI Hospitality and Tourism faculty welcomed the Minister of Education, Marisol Lopez Tromp to the commencement exercises and Mr. Martin Ras as Keynote Speaker.

Mr. Ras is a graduate of the University of Aruba who went on to obtain degrees at the University of Detroit, the Detroit Institute of Commerce and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. His work experience included tenure with the Bank of America in San Francisco and Texas Instruments. Mr. Ras spoke of not only the importance of obtaining a good education, but also commitment to the community, which he displays with his own voluntary work and diligent activism, being a member of the Lions Club, I Have a Dream, Big Brother, Lighthouse for the Blind, the Positive Thinkers Club and the Bible Club. He brought to the students a personal favorite message "People don't care how much you know until they feel you care."

The other students that joyfully tossed their mortarboards into the air upon receiving their diplomas were Darrely van Dieran, Tamara Gario, Marwin Jansen, Cindy Kun, Henping Lee, Godelieve Olibrice, Otmar Ponse, Avery Shipley, Marc Tiemes, Gloria Vega, Emile Kock, and Edymar Tromp. Commencement exercises are a special, emotionally charged moment for all involved, students, families, and faculty alike. Although he was not singled out for special honor, graduate Otmar Ponse, upon receiving his diploma, felt compelled to come to the podium to share those feelings with the gathering. His statements reflected what most of the graduates felt, their pride in having their efforts over the past years acknowledged, and not only how important this moment was, but particularly touching that those that had supported them could share it. He particularly praised the faculty of the EPI for their continual encouragement and dedication in preparing their students to fulfill the school's vision, which is to "Create career-oriented, balanced and knowledgeable professionals." According to Otmar, and all the other students, the faculty of the EPI Hospitality and Tourism Unit ably complete the school's mission, to "Share Quality Hospitality Education through Inspiration, Commitment, Care, and Experience." With their Associates Degrees, a number of the students will go on to jobs that already await them, while others will further their education at any of several institutions of higher learning in the United States, Europe and Latin America that are associated with the EPI.

Congratulations to the Class of 2006!